



JOHNSONIAN NEWS LETTER

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New York 27, N. Y.*

Vol. XIV, No. 4

December 1954

DAVID HUME

For many years your editor and Ernest Mossner (Univ. of Texas) have been carrying on a friendly argument about the relative merits of our respective enthusiasms. Why, Ernest complains, should the mid-eighteenth century always be called "The Age of Johnson"? Why not more properly "The Age of Hume"? The philosopher, he insists, was much the greater man, and the more representative of his age. He was more in tune with the spirit of the enlightenment, added more to general knowledge, was more cosmopolitan in his tastes, better adjusted, better tempered, and more consistent. "Le bon David" -- kindly, tolerant, and broad -- was a brilliant writer and a profound thinker. He was the center of a distinguished literary circle, as gifted as that which gathered in the Mitre in London. Why isn't he a better representative of his time than the prejudiced, eccentric London dictionary maker?

Well, there is his argument, and he has a cogent case. Yet we remain unconvinced, and we imagine some of you will also stay staunchly on the other side. Literary history simply does not move logically. Hume may be closer to the main currents of thought, but Johnson is closer to the typical British personality. It is by his weaknesses, as well as by his strength that he endears himself to us. But we won't parade our arguments further here. You can guess what they are. Temporarily we are happy to give way and admit that in December 1954 David rides triumphant over Samuel. This is Hume's month. Ernest Mossner, his most devoted adherent, rides the crest of the wave.

For years Mossner has been discovering new facts about Hume, and those of us who have been following his work have been eagerly awaiting the magnum opus. Now here it is -- not one big volume, but two. By a strange coincidence, the two volumes reached our

desk on the same day, one from Oxford, the other from Texas. Two very important contributions to knowledge, which all of you should examine! The first to be published is New Letters of David Hume, edited by Raymond Klibansky and Ernest C. Mossner, a supplement to J.Y.T. Greig's two-volume edition (Clarendon Press). Included are 127 letters, most of them hitherto unprinted, the others not completely printed before.

The other volume, The Life of David Hume (printed and issued in Great Britain by Thomas Nelson and Sons, and published in this country by the University of Texas Press) appeared December 31. The handsome format, the two color illustrations, the wealth of others in black and white, the beauty of the printing and binding, make this the biography of the year. It is cheap, even at the \$7.50 American price. As a piece of book-making it is outstanding.

The same can be said, too, of the contents (We speak only as a student of biography, not as a philosopher, which we don't pretend to be). Mossner has searched diligently over the years for every available scrap of evidence, and has digested them. He never parades his knowledge, or throws in useless facts to impress his reader. He tells his story smoothly and with grace. He makes David Hume live for twentieth century readers. This, we are tempted to say, is Hume. This is the way he must have been. No higher tribute can be given to any biography. Here is the whole life of a great man, narrated with perception and skill. We take off our hat to the author.

One entertaining discovery, made by Ed Ruhe (Cornell) just in time to be incorporated in Mossner's new life, is the proof that Hume and Johnson did once meet at a London dinner table. It was on August 20, 1763, that Thomas Birch wrote to Philip Yorke of dining at the Royal Chaplain's table at St. James, along with Hume, David Mallet, Robert Wood. Then he added, "Your Lordship will smile when I tell you, that another of our Company at dinner today was Sam. Johnson." Evidently Birch saw some incongruity in the two men placidly dining together. What a pity he did not record some of the conversation!

SWIFT AND THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

The purpose of Louis Landa's new book, Swift and the Church of Ireland (Clarendon), is made clear on the jacket. This is not a

study of the Dean's religious ideas or of his basic faith. Instead it is an account of his long career in the church. It is specifically an historical and biographical study. For too long the spot-light has been focused on other aspects of Swift's life. Now at last we can adequately appraise him in his chosen profession. And the result is to dispel many misconceptions.

In brief, Landa's long search through Irish church records and government documents, through unpublished letters and notes, has been amply justified. As one scholar remarked to us recently, there is more new biographical information about Swift in this book than in any for a very long time. Perhaps no single discovery is startling, but the bringing together of hundreds of new facts is. For the first time we have a complete and rounded picture of the activities of the Dean of St. Patrick's. In a clear, easy style Landa admirably presents the evidence. He wastes no time on superfluous matter, but packs his pages with details. There is no need to beat around the bush: this is a very important book, one which every student of Swift should study and digest.

POPE'S MINOR POEMS

The Twickenham Edition of the Poems of Alexander Pope moves steadily toward completion under the admirable supervision of John Butt. The latest part to appear is Volume VI, the Minor Poems (issued in this country by the Yale University Press). Originally planned to be done wholly by the late Norman Ault, it has been completed by the general editor. Ault had the material almost in shape at the time of his death, but it devolved on Butt to put the volume together and see it through the press. The efforts of two such editors have produced a very superior final product. Each had just the qualities needed to reinforce and balance the other - Ault a genius for research, and Butt outstanding gifts as a judicious editor.

The Minor Poems is not the kind of a book that one can take in upon a single reading. One needs years of study to appreciate all the devoted labor which went into the assembling of the evidence and all the difficult decisions which the editors faced in deciding on the authenticity of individual poems. So much of the material was never officially claimed by Pope. Almost every scrap was a separate problem. Which verses to accept, and which

to relegate to the large section at the back of "Poems of Doubtful Authorship"? Obviously it is impossible here to weigh any of the evidence and judge the final result, but from our own cursory study we think Butt has shown splendid judgment and restraint in making the final decisions.

JOHNSON AND BOSWELL NOTES

We have recently heard from Stjepan Kresic (Buliceva 5, Zagreb, Yugoslavia), who is engaged on a translation of Boswell's Life of Johnson into the Serbo-Croat language. What he intends is an abridgement, which will sell at a low price. If it is successful, he hopes eventually to translate the entire work. Recently, while in London on a visit, he translated for the BBC eight talks on Boswell, Johnson, etc. written by Bonamy Dobrée, which will be broadcast for Yugoslav listeners on BBC foreign language programs. Two of his own talks "Visiting Doctor Johnson" were to be broadcast in the same series during November and December.

The financial support for Doctor Johnson's House in Gough Square, London is always precarious. Income is limited and there is not sufficient endowment to pay normal running expenses. Thus there is always the need to raise additional money from voluntary contributions. If any of you desire to make a gift (single or annual) to the House Trust -- any amount will be welcome -- write to the Hon. Secretary, F. B. Cockburn, 10 Little College Street, Westminster, London S.W. 1.

The University of Florida plans to observe the bicentenary of Johnson's Dictionary by publishing a symposium, tentatively entitled Johnson's 'Dictionary' 1755-1955: Some Facts and Problems. The volume will contain an annotated list of items concerning the Dictionary from the date of publication to the present, an essay on Johnson's use of Bailey's dictionary, an essay comparing the ideas of linguistics and lexicography expressed by Johnson when he proposed his Dictionary in 1747 and when he finished it in 1755, and a reprint of the Plan and the Preface. In the next number of JNL we will have more to say about further preparations for the bicentenary celebration, at Yale, Columbia, and the University of Chicago. If you know of plans for exhibitions elsewhere, please let us know.

William Frost writes from the Univ. of Calif. at Santa Barbara, commenting on the vitality of The Rambler on the west coast. A year ago the decision was made by his English department to include Johnson as part of the required reading in freshman English. Bronson's Rinehart edition was used and most of the course reading was from The Rambler. Moreover, they required a substantial outside essay on Johnson, and both this year and last, Frost adds, several students voluntarily elected to write on the Prayers and Meditations. We suspect that other colleges might have similar happy experiences with Johnson as required reading in the freshman course, if they had the nerve to try.

T. S. Eliot is one of the newest members of the Johnson Club in England. The two most recent meetings of the Club, which dines in the garret at Gough Square, were addressed by Esmond de Beer, on problems of indexing, and by Tom Copeland, on the great Burke edition.

This year the annual wreath-laying ceremony at Westminster Abbey on December 13 was carried out by S. C. Roberts.

For the "Children's Books Section" of TLS for November 19 there was a front page essay on "The Indulgence of Children" based on Johnson's letters to Queeney Thrale. It is a delightful piece, though too much under the influence of the late Lord Lansdowne's interpretation of Mrs. Thrale.

Your editor's Young Sam Johnson is scheduled for publication by McGraw-Hill late in March or early April. This biography follows Johnson to his fortieth year and to the appearance of The Vanity of Human Wishes.

Moray McLaren's Highland Jaunt, the pleasant story of a trip to the Hebrides following the route of Johnson and Boswell, will be published in this country by William Sloane.

Just received from Fritz Göttinger is his German translation of Boswell's Grosse Reise: Deutschland und die Schweiz, 1764. It is an attractive volume, published by Diana Verlag, Zürich, with 11 large illustrations.

The next installment of Boswell's journals, Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica and France, 1765-1766, edited by

Frank Brady and Fred Pottle, has now been announced for publication by McGraw-Hill on April 28.

The Transactions 1954 of the Lichfield Johnson Society, sent on by Percy Laithwaite, contains a full account of the annual celebrations in September. Included is the Presidential address by Laurence Meynell, and also an address by S. A. Jeavons on "The Rise of Sculpture in Staffordshire during the 16th Century" delivered at the general meeting last March. There is, in addition, an account of a visit by Lichfield Johnsonians to Chatsworth.

THE M. L. A. PROGRAM

At the recent M.L.A. meeting in New York the following scheduled papers had to do with our period: David M. Vieth, "Thorpe, Todd, and the Text of Rochester"; Vinton A. Dearing, "The Printing of The Beggar's Opera"; Brewster Rogerson, "The Augustan Pantomime Dance"; Aubrey L. Williams, "Pope's Dunciad: Its Thematic Progressions"; James M. Osborn, "Pope, the Byzantine Empress, and Walpole's Whore"; Ernest Tuveson, "The Imagination as a Means of Grace"; Ralph Cohen, "Associationism and Literary Theory"; Thomas W. Copeland, "The Letters of Edmund Burke"; Allen T. Hazen, "Horace Walpole's Library: Some Problems of Provenance"; W. R. Keast, "The Critical Significance of Intellectual History in Samuel Johnson." Lucyle Hook arranged a delightful concert of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theater music for the English Drama group. Included were songs from the plays of Dryden, D'Urfey, Motteux, Rowe, and others. Some five hundred people attended and there were many who had to stand.

SOME NEW BOOKS

Since we have enthusiastically reviewed the newest additions to the Yale Walpole edition in SRL, we will not repeat our encomiums here. It should be enough to say that the first three volumes of the Walpole-Mann correspondence (17, 18, 19 of the grand series) are fully up to the high standard set in the earlier publications. All congratulations to W. S. Lewis, Warren Hunting Smith, and George L. Lam.

We are of two minds about A. R. Humphreys' The Augustan World: Life and Letters in Eighteenth-Century England (Methuen).

Humphreys has made a valiant effort to combine in one book of less than 300 pages the essence of the whole eighteenth century. He has major sections on social life, the world of business, public affairs, religious life, philosophy, the visual arts, always relating the material to literature. For beginning students, who wish a broad, general review of the age, it will be useful. But for scholars there is not much which is new or stimulating. And we tend to agree with the reviewer in TLS who complained about Humphreys' use of Augustan to cover the whole period. We much prefer ourselves to use the term specifically for a particular approach to life and literature, concentrated in the early century.

Kenneth Young's John Dryden: a Critical Biography (Sylvan Press) has the merit of being enthusiastic about its subject. Young admires "Glorious John" and is able to pass on some of his delight to his readers. In places the narrative slips into a kind of fiction, with imagined conversations reconstructed from other types of evidence, but it is pleasantly done and should offend no readers. Young has leaned heavily for evidence on G. R. Noyes's edition, on the volumes by Osborn, Nichol Smith, Jack, Bredvold, Ward, but he has obviously not consulted important articles in the periodicals, and thus has missed a number of vital points. We still need a comprehensive and perceptive critical life of Dryden comparable to Krutch's Johnson.

In Laureatè of Peace: On the Genius of Alexander Pope, G. Wilson Knight brings together in one volume five essays of varying length: (1) on Pope's diction and doctrine; (2) "The Vital Flame" repeated from his The Burning Oracle of 1939; (3) an introduction and an analysis of The Temple of Fame, with suggestions concerning the symbolism in the poem; (4) a discussion of Byron's adulation of Pope; and (5) some reflections on Pope's poetic thought in relation to our own time. All but the second are here printed for the first time.

Louis G. Locke has produced in Tillotson: a Study in Seventeenth-Century Literature (Anglistica, Vol. IV -- Rosenkilde and Bagger, Copenhagen) a welcome study of the life and influence during the following century of one of the great writers of sermons of the Restoration period. Locke admits in his conclusion that he would like to rescue Tillotson from obscurity and neglect, and he strives manfully to point out the importance of the Archbishop as a practical religious thinker and as an early pioneer of the plain style. Locke thinks that

Tillotson's thought is deeply significant, as synthesizing the main current of ideas of his time. And he cannot justify oblivion for a man whose prose style was used as a model by so many schoolboys in the eighteenth century. Yet who now will avidly go back to read Tillotson's sermons? It is certainly a shift in taste in genres that has pronounced the sentence of doom. No matter what we may think just, Tillotson is unlikely ever to be revived, except historically as an important part of the development of modern prose style. But, just the same, we are happy to have Locke's gallant attempt at resuscitation.

In our last issue we mentioned having received John Traugott's Tristram Shandy's World: Sterne's Philosophical Rhetoric (Univ. of Calif. Press). Now that we've had a chance to examine it, we predict that many will find it a highly provocative book, though not too easy to read. As its title suggests, the book examines Tristram Shandy as the work not of an eccentric novelist but rather of a rhetorician interested in explaining the intricate workings of the mind. Traugott tilts at some traditional notions about Sterne's use of Locke, maintaining that Sterne mocked the philosophical assumptions of Locke while using his terminology in order to demonstrate the moral value of wit, not rational analysis, as the best way to understand human motivation.

Admittedly a Gay enthusiast, Sven M. Armens, in his John Gay, Social Critic (King's Crown Press), has studied Gay as a serious poet who deserves credit for being more than an irresponsible Scriblerian and the author of the highly successful Beggar's Opera. By close study of Gay's work, Armens -- among other things -- makes a case for Gay's revitalizing the pastoral by using it to convey serious moral values. Gay can thus claim an important role in the development leading to Wordsworth and later Romantics who used the pastoral form to present their most significant themes. Those of us who cherish a picture of the amiable, careless Gay will have to admit that Armens does a rather convincing job of adding somber tones.

Students of the novel and of the history of ideas should be delighted by Alice Green Fredman's Diderot and Sterne (Columbia Univ. Press). This is a lively and penetrating study, which clearly explains the relationship and significance of these two eccentric geniuses. Alice Fredman shows how closely parallel were their interests, ideas, and practices. By examining their treatments of sensibility, humor, literary procedures and style, she concludes that as transitional

figures they anticipate some of the most exciting elements of Romantic literature. Lovers of Diderot will be especially pleased to find the old charge of plagiarism re-examined and Diderot presented as the vigorous, original thinker he was. This book, together with Traugott's, should keep ardent Shandean satisfied for quite some time.

Continental and Colonial Servants in Eighteenth Century England (Smith College Studies in History, Vol. XL, 1954), by J. Jean Hecht, studies the foreign members of the servant class in eighteenth-century England -- where they came from, how they came, what their relationships with English servants were. The text is not nearly so forbidding as the subject: the author has a fine eye for colorful detail and apposite quotations. Students of English literature might find this short study quite useful as a source of information about a class often mentioned in literature, but seldom investigated.

An interesting recent acquisition is Oliver Goldsmith: A Prospect of Society, edited by William B. Todd; printed in King's College, Cambridge, at the Water Lane Press. Sixty copies only have been printed. What is included in this 22 page brochure is a reprinting of the unique set of quarto half-sheets discovered in 1902 by Bertram Dobell, which turned out to contain in disarray most of the poem which Goldsmith later called The Traveller. Todd discusses briefly in his Introduction the various conjectures as to the origin of the sheets, then provides a reconstructed text, with some textual notes. The Water Lane Press, it might be added, was established by Philip Gaskell in September 1953 for the purpose of offering practical instruction in the art of printing. This particular issue was sent to the printer on 4 April 1954, the 180th anniversary of the poet's death, and was sent out to interested scholars in time to mark the 190th anniversary of the original publication.

After years of work, Henry Pettit has now printed his Bibliography of Young's "Night-Thoughts" (University of Colorado Studies, Series in Language and Literature, No. 5). Provided with six facsimile title pages, and with full descriptions of the various editions, this will be a useful reference work for anyone interested in Young's major work. In his Introduction Pettit gives what seems to us the best short account of the writing and publication of the poem.

We have received a strange little brochure from the Rodale Press, Emmaus, Pennsylvania. The 32 page piece is entitled Old English Coffee Houses, but for the most part it is a reprint of two rather bawdy pamphlets printed in 1674 -- The Women's Petition Against Coffee, and The Men's Answer to the Women's Petition. There are various color illustrations and a map on the cover.

In The White Rose of Stuart (Nelson) Lillian de la Torre retells for children the romantic story of Flora Macdonald and her connection with "Bonnie Prince Charlie." With her skill at telling a story, the book should be welcomed by your teen-age girls and boys. And you may be sure that it is based on scholarly research into the facts, even though the telling is largely fictional.

COMING BOOKS

G. H. Healey's Letters of Daniel Defoe (Clarendon), we believe, is out in England, but we have not yet been able to examine a copy. Announced as expected soon, also from Clarendon, is Helen T. Heath's Letters of Samuel Pepys and His Family Circle. This spring the Yale University Press will publish William Frost's Dryden and the Art of Translation; and the first two volumes of René Wellek's History of Modern Criticism 1750-1950. Wellek's two volumes will cover the later 18th century and the Romantic Movement. We look forward to them eagerly. Peter Quennell's Hogarth's Progress is announced for spring publication by Viking. Warren L. Fleischauer (Mich. State) is editing a Selected Lives of the Poets for Henry Regnery, publishers.

RECENT ARTICLES

There are a number of articles concerned with Dryden: John M. Aden, "Dryden and Saint Evremond," in Comparative Literature for Summer 1954; Vinton A. Dearing, "Dryden's MacFlecknoe: The Case for Authorial Revision," Studies in Bibliography, 1955; Lillian Feder, "John Dryden's Use of Classical Rhetoric," PMLA for Dec.; Frank H. Moore, "Heroic Comedy: a New Interpretation of Dryden's Assignation," SP for Oct.; John Harrington Smith, "Dryden and Flecknoe; a Conjecture," PQ for July. Concerned with Swift are: James Brown, "Swift as Moralist," PQ for Oct.; R. C. Elliott, "Swift and Dr. Eachard," PMLA for Dec.; George P. Mayhew, "A Draft of Ten Lines from Swift's Poem to John Gay," Bulletin of John Rylands Library for Sept., and "Swift's

Manuscript Version of 'On his own Deafness', " HLQ for Nov.; W. A. Murray, "Frye's Article on Swift's Yahoo," JHI for Oct.; Walter J. Ong, "Swift on the Mind: The Myth of Asepsis," MLQ for Sept.; and Roland M. Smith, "Swift's Little Language and Nonsense Names," JEGP for April.

Having to do with the early part of the period are: G. L. Anderson, "Lord Halifax in Gildon's New Rehearsal," PQ for Oct.; Rodney M. Baine, "The Apparition of Mrs. Veal: A Neglected Account," PMLA for June, and "Defoe and Mrs. Bargrave's Story," PQ for Oct.; A. D. McKillop, "Letters from Aaron Hill to Richard Savage," in N&Q for Sept.; Henry K. Miller, "Benjamin Stillingfleet's Essay on Conversation, 1737 and Henry Fielding," in PQ for Oct.; John Sparrow, "Pope's Anthologia Again," PQ for Oct.; Thomas B. Stroup, "The Authorship of the Prologue to Lee's 'Constantine the Great'," in N&Q for Sept.

Concerned with the later part of the century are: E. L. Brooks, "Gray's 'Civil Young Farmer,' of Grange," in N&Q for Oct.; Albert B. Friedman, "The First Draft of Percy's Reliques," PMLA for Dec., and "Percy's Folio Manuscript Revalued," JEGP for Oct.; Anita D. Fritz, "Berkeley's Self -- Its Origin in Malebranche," JHI for Oct.; Paul Fussell, "A Note on Samuel Johnson and the Rise of Accentual Prosodic Theory," PQ for Oct.; A. LeRoy Greason, "Fielding's An Address to the Electors of Great Britain," PQ for July; B. L. Greenberg, "Laurence Sterne and Chambers' 'Cyclopaedia'," MLN for Dec.; Kenneth E. Harper, "A Russian Critic and Tristram Shandy," MP for Nov.; A. B. Shepperson, "Yorick as Ministering Angel" in Virginia Quarterly for Winter 1954; A. T. Hazen, "The Booksellers' 'Ring' at Strawberry Hill in 1842," Studies in Bibliography, 1955; W. R. Keast, "Johnson's Plan of a Dictionary: a Textual Crux," PQ for July; William B. Todd, "Quadruple Imposition: An Account of Goldsmith's Traveller," Studies in Bibliography, 1955.

Some articles of general interest are: Robert C. Elliott, "The Satirist and Society," ELH for Sept.; W. Powell Jones, "The Captive Linnet: a Footnote on Eighteenth-Century Sentiment," PQ for July; Charles C. Mish, "A Note on the Fiction Reprint Market in the Early Eighteenth Century," The Newberry Library Bulletin for Nov.

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS ITEMS

From H. Clifford Smith and W. R. Batty comes word of plans for the reconstruction of St. Clement Danes Church, which has been taken

over by the Royal Air Force as its own church. It is hoped that work will be completed within two years. The intention is to restore the church as it was when Sir Christopher Wren had finished it in 1681, and James Gibbs, his pupil, had added the steeple in 1719. When the church was destroyed on May 10, 1941 by an oil bomb, the famous peal "Oranges and Lemons" crashed from the belfry and all ten of the bells were damaged. A new set will be cast from the old metal. In a recent decision in Chancery the will of the late Mrs. Pennington-Bickford, leaving an estate of £27,000 for the restoration of the church which her husband had served so long and lovingly, was declared valid. The money will be used for the purposes mentioned in the will, for work on the altar, bells, windows and tower.

V. de S. Pinto (Univ. of Nottingham) has been asking for signatures in an attempt to save from demolition the house where William Blake was born, at the corner of Broadwick St. and Marshall St., near Golden Square, Soho.

During November and December the Huntington Library had an exhibition of the original water color drawings, pen and ink sketches, aquatints, and other prints of Thomas Rowlandson.

Bill Wimsatt's new book The Verbal Icon was the subject of a radio talk in Italy by Mario Praz.

Robert H. Carnie (Bedford College, Univ. of London) writes that he is preparing for publication a biographical and critical study of Lord Hailes. One aspect of his work may immediately be of use to other scholars. He has prepared a check-list of Hailes's correspondents and correspondence, endeavoring to list all available material, published or unpublished. Hailes's known correspondents number at least 170 and the letters are a mine of useful miscellaneous information. There are unpublished letters by Thomas Astle, James Beattie, Hugh Blair, Lord Monboddo, Richard Owen Cambridge, Richard Gough, Andrew Kippis, Bishop Lowth, Edmond Malone, Thomas Pennant, William Robertson, to name only a few. Copies of Carnie's checklist are available for consultation in the Yale University Library and the National Library of Scotland.

John C. Stephens, Jr. (Emory) writes that for several years he has been searching unsuccessfully for a copy of the fifth edition (1729) of Steele's Guardian. If anyone knows where there is a copy, Stephens asks that he be notified.